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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Letter dated 22 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith statements issued by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia and the Republic of South Ossetia addressed to the States Members of the United Nations, the participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the States members of the Council of Europe (see annexes I and II).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

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Annex I to the letter dated 22 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia addressed to the States Members of the United Nations, the participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the States members of the Council of Europe

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Abkhazia considers it necessary to explain the position of Abkhazia on the issues raised, inter alia, in the latest consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia presented by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, which was issued at the end of October 2017. The topics recently addressed in such materials remain essentially unchanged: the issue of refugees; the crossing of the Administrative Boundary Line between Abkhazia and Georgia; the closure of a number of temporary crossing points there; the legal status of residents of the Gali district; education for Gali schoolchildren in Georgian territory; the denial of entry to Abkhazia for representatives of international organizations, and so forth.

It should first of all be noted that the authors of the report give a clearly politicized interpretation of the current issues in Abkhazia and consciously focus on vilifying the authorities of the Republic. No attempt has been made to present a more balanced picture or to take the positive developments inside the country into account. The purpose of such publications is essentially to create a strong negative image of an independent Abkhaz State that is supposedly unable to ensure compliance with fundamental human rights and freedoms.

It goes without saying that no such report can go without mentioning the "territorial integrity of Georgia". As the Republic of Abkhazia has repeatedly provided detailed and exhaustive comments on this issue, there is no need to raise it again.

As regards the issue of refugees, it should be recalled that the politicized position of Georgia is the main reason impeding a solution. It will also be recalled that, as agreed by Dmitry Medvedev and Nicholas Sarkozy on 12 August 2008, the issue of refugees is to be discussed within the framework of the Geneva discussions on security and stability in Transcaucasia. However, for propaganda purposes, Tbilisi constantly raises this issue at other international forums where representatives of the Republic of Abkhazia are unable to participate and, consequently, express their opinions. Owing to this, Abkhazia refuses, as a matter of principle, to discuss the issue of refugees within the framework of the Geneva discussions.

As regards the procedure for crossing the Abkhaz-Georgian State border at the Inguri River and the decision taken by the Government of Abkhazia in December 2016 to close two temporary crossing points, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia has already noted that determining the regime for crossing the State border is an exclusively domestic matter for the Republic of Abkhazia. There is no mandate for outside entities, including international organizations, to address this issue. We reiterate that the aforementioned crossing points were temporarily operational over a period — from 2012 to 2017 — when modern infrastructure had not yet been built in the border area. Significant funds were allocated for that purpose, particularly for the repair of road surfaces. In 2016, a commuter bus line was opened between the border villages and the crossing point, and the capacity of the main crossing point at Inguri was increased. All these measures were aimed at creating comfortable conditions for

accessing the State border and a more effective system to manage its crossing. Allegations that these measures were aimed at creating obstacles for residents of the Gali district are therefore at variance with the facts.

Currently, the procedure for crossing the State border with Georgia is governed by the Act of the Republic of Abkhazia on the procedure for leaving and entering the Republic of Abkhazia. A citizen of Georgia, like the citizen of any other country, may submit an application for entry into Abkhazia that will be considered within seven days. Applicants receive notification of the decision by email. In the event of a positive answer, foreign nationals — including Georgian citizens — are entitled to cross the border at the Inguri crossing point within one month.

In the first half of 2017 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia received over 4,500 requests for permits to cross the border between Georgia and Abkhazia, and only 133 applications were rejected. In all cases, the reason for rejection was the participation of applicants, or their immediate family members, in the war in Abkhazia from 1992 to 1993 on the side of the Georgian armed forces.

Against that background, the allegations made by representatives of Georgia and international organizations concerning restrictions of movement across the border at the Inguri River are clearly unfounded.

It should also be noted that, as a result of the steps taken by the leadership of Abkhazia, there has been a significant improvement in the criminal situation in the Gali district in recent years. This has also been confirmed by local residents.

Regarding accusations that the Abkhaz authorities have allegedly adopted a policy of discrimination against the Gali population, in which their rights are violated or restricted, we should like to highlight the following.

In December 2015, the parliament of the Republic of Abkhazia adopted the Act on the legal status of foreign citizens in the Republic of Abkhazia. This was adopted because of the need to establish a legal framework governing the rights of foreign nationals in Abkhazia and the status of Gali district residents.

It will be recalled that a significant proportion of residents of the Gali district have received Georgian citizenship, whereas Abkhaz legislation permits dual citizenship with the Russian Federation only. The Act on the legal status of foreign citizens removes the legal vacuum that had arisen regarding the status of Gali residents. This Act enables long-staying foreign nationals in Abkhazia to obtain residence permits and temporary residence permits. Residence permits are issued for a period of five years. Upon expiry, their term may be extended for additional five years. The number of extensions is unlimited. An individual with resident permits spanning 10 years may submit a request for Abkhaz nationality, on condition of continuous residence in the territory of Abkhazia — in accordance with the Act on citizenship. Residence permits have been issued since 17 April 2017.

Pursuant to a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Abkhazia, consultations are under way between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation regarding the use of residence permits for entering and leaving the Russian Federation. In this context it should be underscored that national passports of the Republic of Abkhazia cannot be granted the status of international travel documents because of the opposition of Georgia and those States supporting it. Residents of the Gali district holding Abkhaz passports, like other residents of the Republic, therefore have no opportunity to travel to countries further abroad.

The recurrent accusations being made about infringements of the right of Gali schoolchildren to receive an education in their native language are largely spurious.

It should be pointed out that the measures taken by the Abkhaz leadership to transfer schools in the lower Gali district to Russian-language education are fully in accordance with the Constitution and legislation of the Republic of Abkhazia. The State language of the Republic of Abkhazia is Abkhaz. Russian and Abkhaz are the recognized languages of governmental and other institutions. We note that, for example, Armenian schools, which are a successful example of a well-functioning model of multilingual education, also teach Russian alongside Armenian and Abkhaz.

Georgian schools in the Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli districts switched to Russian-language education back in 1994. However, 11 village schools in the lower Gali district were long-time exceptions and were not, in practice, integrated into the Abkhaz system of education. In 2015, these schools were transferred to the special State education programme, in accordance with which the first four grades transferred to Russian-language education. It should be noted that the teachers at these schools took Russian-language courses in the summer of 2015 in preparation for this switch to Russian.

The Abkhaz authorities believe that switching to Russian will eventually create favourable conditions for the integration of Gali children into Abkhaz society and will enable them to become fully-fledged citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia. In contrast, continued education in Georgian in accordance with Georgian school curricula — which is itself unacceptable because of the polarized views, for instance, on some episodes of history — will only encourage the departure of the Gali district residents from Abkhazia and their integration into Georgia.

The Council of Europe report under consideration once again spreads accusations that the Abkhaz Government is purportedly restricting the activities of international organizations in Abkhazia. However, it notes that the Council of Europe (Secretariat members and experts) "has continued enjoying access to Sukhumi for the purpose of implementation of Confidence-Building Measures".[1] The report also lists joint activities organized in the framework of strengthening Confidence-Building Measures. It should be noted that there are currently 10 international non-governmental organizations operating in the Republic. Four of these are branches of United Nations entities — the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund (since 2017). The International Committee of the Red Cross has been operating in Abkhazia since 1993. Organizations such as Action Against Hunger, World Vision International and Halo Trust also work there.

As regards those international organizations whose representatives were not afforded an opportunity to visit Abkhazia, it should be noted that the Government of the Republic of Abkhazia is fully aware of their bias and categorical commitment to Georgian propaganda. It is the field "studies" of these organizations that produce such politicized reports. This is the basis on which Abkhazia decides whether to grant particular organizations access to the Republic.

The Abkhaz authorities provide all the necessary conditions for human rights experts to carry out their work. Contrary to the narrative that the Republic is "closed", extensive work was done here in 2015 and 2016 by Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, a respected expert in the field of human rights hired by the European Union. The results were published in a special report. It is telling that this rather balanced and objective research was, under the pressure from Tbilisi, put on the back burner in Brussels, because the conclusions reached by Mr. Hammarberg convincingly refuted Georgian propaganda.

[1] Council of Europe, Consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia (April 2017–September 2017), p. 3.

It is quite clear therefore that the examples of human rights violations cited by the Council of Europe, including those alleged to have occurred in the Gali district of the Republic of Abkhazia, are false and misleading. Conversely, cases of discrimination against Abkhaz citizens by Georgia and its allies remain completely outside the scope of research by international organizations. In that connection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia once again calls on the international community to pay attention to the blatantly coordinated and discriminatory visa policy of the European Union and Georgia, which is designed to bring about international isolation of the citizens of the Republic of Abkhazia. These actions not only violate the human right to freedom of movement, but are also contrary to fundamental international principles, including freedom of access to education, skilled health care, cultural and athletic activities, and many others. What we have here, essentially, is the creation of serious obstacles to the development of an entire people. However, all these facts testifying to discrimination against our citizens and the violation of their rights are simply being ignored.

In hindering the international travel of Abkhaz citizens, Georgia is acting as a persistent violator of fundamental human rights and freedoms. This policy is reinforced by Tbilisi at the legislative level. We refer here to the discriminatory Georgian law on the so-called "occupied territories", whereby citizens of foreign countries entering the Republic of Abkhazia from territories other than Georgia face criminal prosecution. These actions by the Georgian authorities directly contravene article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms the right of every person to freedom of movement, to leave any country, including their own, and to return to his or her country.

In the opinion adopted at its ninety-seventh plenary session on 9 December 2013, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe called for a review of the discriminatory law on the occupied territories. The need for a review was also mentioned by the European Commission in its report and recommendations on the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in Georgia in 2014. In the consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe also mentions the "urgent need for modifying the law".[2]

In recent months, Georgia has made concerted efforts to destroy historical memory in relation to Abkhazia. This was particularly manifest in the attempt to demolish a monument erected in the Scottish town of Kilmarnock commemorating Abkhaz soldiers who had fallen from Georgian aggression in Abkhazia in 1992–1993. At the instigation of Tamar Beruchashvili, Ambassador of Georgia to the United Kingdom, the Government of the United Kingdom stated that the memorial needed to be dismantled. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia considered those plans to be attempted vandalism and called on the international community to provide an adequate assessment of the barbaric intentions of Georgia. It should be noted that the démarche by the Abkhaz Ministry of Foreign Affairs had some effect, and the Scottish municipal authorities expressed their willingness to take the Abkhaz position into consideration when dealing with this issue.

In view of the above, the Abkhaz side once again calls upon the international community to refrain from a one-sided pro-Georgian approach and from consistently neglecting the position of the Republic of Abkhazia. Only by adopting a balanced view of existing issues and taking the political realities of the region into account can progress be achieved in normalizing relations between Abkhazia and Georgia, thereby enhancing security in Transcaucasia.

[2] Ibid., p. 6.

Annex II to the letter dated 22 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Ossetia to the States Members of the United Nations, the participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the States members of the Council of Europe

Since 2009, Georgia has submitted a draft resolution to the General Assembly every year on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The text of the resolution imposed on the international community contains no reference to the fact that the appearance of these refugees and internally displaced persons is directly related to the wars waged by Georgia against South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Nor is there any reference to the fact that over 100,000 Ossetians have become refugees as a result of ethnic cleansing in Georgia, and that the Georgian authorities have done nothing at all since then to solve the problems of the refugees.

The refugee issue has been a harsh reality of life for several generations in South Ossetia over the past 100 years. It began in June 1920, when Georgian forces carried out a brutal massacre and set fire to our entire country for refusing to recognize the authority of Georgia, which had decided to secede from Russia and take with it the Ossetian lands. Several thousand Ossetians then became victims of genocide. Almost the entire surviving population of South Ossetia at the time was forced to flee through the passes of the Great Caucasus Range into Russian territory. The resettlement commission set up by the Georgian Government worked tirelessly for a few months to remove all Ossetians from the territory of South Ossetia and to relocate Georgian peasants to Ossetian lands, distributing among them the movable and immovable property confiscated from the Ossetians.[1]

Ossetian refugees were able to return only a year later, in 1921, after the Red Army had entered Georgia. The Bolsheviks then divided up Ossetia, handing over the southern area to the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, while the northern area remained part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. South Ossetia was granted autonomous status within the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, but that status was not sufficient to protect the rights of the Ossetians, who suffered discrimination and harsh repression by the nationalistically inclined powers of Soviet Georgia. In the second half of the 1940s, about 10 per cent of the Ossetian population in the autonomous district was forced to move to North Ossetia, thereby becoming de facto forcibly displaced persons.

At the end of the 1980s, radical nationalism was on the rise in Georgia, and one of its regular slogans was "Georgia for the Georgians". There were open calls to remove all Ossetians and other non-Georgians from the country, abolish the autonomous status, forbid non-Georgians from having more than two children and prohibit the use of non-Georgian languages in the workplace and in education. Attempts by South Ossetia to establish legal guarantees for its autonomous status were categorically rejected, and a campaign was launched to abolish the autonomous status.

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[1] *Genotsid osetin*: 1920 (*dokumenty i materialy*) [the genocide of the Ossetians: 1920 (documents and materials)], Tskhinvali, 2009, pp. 81–83.

Georgian nationalists soon moved on from political declarations on the issue to violent action. The escalation of armed violence against the Ossetians not only in the territory of South Ossetia, but also within Georgia itself, resulted in a stream of refugees forced to flee from the Georgian gunmen. Ossetians from the Borjomi district of Georgia, for example, were forced to cross the mountain passes and seek refuge in Armenia. Many hundreds of Ossetians disappeared without trace in Georgian territory.

Even Ossetians in South Ossetia began to experience harassment in villages with mixed populations. Their Georgian neighbours, influenced by propaganda and with armed support from Tbilisi, forced the Ossetians to abandon their homes, which were then looted and burned or were taken over by Georgians, just as had occurred in 1920. Ossetian villages were attacked by gangs of Georgian gunmen who massacred the Ossetian inhabitants and burned their homes. Unfortunately, these events did not receive adequate attention from the international community and these crimes were not duly condemned. Over 100,000 Ossetian refugees fled Georgia and Ossetian towns in South Ossetia in 1991 and 1992. They found refuge, just as they had in 1920, in North Ossetia and other entities of the Russian Federation.

The ethnic cleansing and genocide perpetrated by Georgia against the Ossetians caused great concern in North Ossetia. In May and June 1992, the Russian Federation, which could no longer stand on the sidelines, applied all possible political leverage to compel Georgia to cease the armed violence. The agreement on principles for the settlement of the Georgia-Ossetia conflict[2] (Sochi agreement), signed in Sochi on 24 June 1992, provided for a ceasefire, the creation of a trilateral peacekeeping force (Georgia, Russia and South Ossetia) and the beginning of negotiations for the return of refugees. Over the intervening years, however, the number of Ossetians who have been able to return to Georgia and retrieve their property is not in the thousands or even in the hundreds. The Georgian courts have used every ploy to deny Ossetians the right to the return of their seized property.

Nevertheless, the Georgian authorities have recognized the existence of the Ossetian refugee issue. The former President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, referred to this issue on several occasions. During the negotiations for a settlement of Georgia-Ossetia relations, some steps were taken to resolve the refugees' problems. According to the statement made following the meeting between the President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, and the President of the Republic of South Ossetia, Ludvig Chibirov, on 14 November 1997, the parties noted with satisfaction that over the past year some progress had been made with regard to the return of refugees. The Georgian side once again confirmed its willingness to facilitate the return of Ossetian families who had been forced to leave areas of Georgia that were outside the conflict zone on account of the illegal actions taken against them. It had been recognized that the year 1998 should be the year of the return of the refugees and forcibly displaced persons to their former places of residence, and the relocation was to be organized within the framework of the Joint Control Commission.[3]

Under the agreement of 24 June 1992, the parties had established the Joint Control Commission on the settlement of the Georgia-Ossetia conflict. The Commission formed an ad hoc committee in 1997 to support the voluntary return of refugees and forcibly displaced persons and adopted a procedure for their voluntary return to their places of former permanent residence as a result of the Georgia-Ossetia conflict.[4] In the context of the committee's efforts, and with support from the Office

[2] *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, No. 145, 26 June 1992.

[3] *Yuzhnaya Osetiya*, No. 65 (4771) (17 November 1997).

[4] Protocol No. 7 of the 13 February 1997 meeting of the Joint Control Commission on the settlement of the Georgia-Ossetia conflict.

of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a few hundred Georgian families had returned to South Ossetia (mainly to the Znauri district) by 2004, whereas only a few dozen Ossetian families had returned to Georgia. Only four of those Ossetian families managed to stay there, while the rest were forced to return to North or South Ossetia because of the lack of even minimal living conditions for them in Georgia and the continuing threat to their security. The main reasons for Ossetians not returning to Georgia were and continue to be: the lack of security guarantees; the absence of a right to the return of their seized homes; the lack of job prospects; and the lack of opportunity to receive an education in their native language or in the Russian language.

Under pressure from the international community, the Georgian authorities reported for a number of years on the preparation of a draft law on property restitution and payment of compensation to victims of the conflict in the former South Ossetian Autonomous District in the territory of Georgia. The law was passed in 2006, but not a single Ossetian family has received compensation or had their rights to forfeited property upheld on the basis of that law.

In all of the intervening years, Ossetian refugees and forcibly displaced persons have received assistance only from the authorities of the Russian Federation and North Ossetia, the entity of the Russian Federation that received the main influx of refugees, the authorities of the Republic of South Ossetia and also, to a limited extent, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Thanks to this assistance, the majority of the refugees have settled down in their new areas, but they have not received any compensation from Georgia for the material and moral damage suffered. The pressing issue of Ossetian refugees from Georgia remains.

Over the period 2007–2008, the Georgian special services organized a continuous series of cruel terrorist acts and murders of Ossetians in an attempt to provoke retaliation. Having failed to achieve this goal, in the night of 7/8 August, Georgian forces carried out an armed attack on South Ossetia.[5] North Ossetia once again received an influx of refugees. The North Ossetian services counted over 35,000 Ossetian refugees who crossed the border during the August war, most of them older persons and women with children.

A few days after the invasion of South Ossetia had begun, the aggressor was stopped by Russian troops and forced to make peace. The Ossetian refugees began to return, and most of those who were displaced because of the 2008 war have now returned. A few thousand Georgian-speaking inhabitants have also returned to South Ossetia (which has a total population of 53,500), to the Leningorsk district that had been liberated from Georgian occupation, an occupation that had lasted from 1992 to August 2008. Some of the ethnic Georgians who were removed by the Georgian authorities from the area of presumed military activity prior to the invasion, together with local fighters who took part in the attack on South Ossetia and then fled to Georgia, are still displaced.

The refugee issue was first taken up at the international level in the Geneva discussions that began in October 2008 under the Medvedev-Sarkozy plan. Several productive meetings took place in that forum in 2008 and 2009, at which the participants began to discuss approaches to the refugee issue. In 2009 South Ossetia

[5] After conducting an investigation, the special independent commission set up by a decision of the Council of the European Union of 2 December 2008, headed by Ms. Heidi Tagliavini, published its report on 30 September 2009, in which it was confirmed that Georgia had started the war (see Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, September 2009, vol. II, p. 209).

unilaterally proposed an initiative for the return of refugees to the Leningorsk region. However, Georgia criticized and rejected this initiative.

Instead of consistently working to resolve the complex and multidimensional refugee issue, in 2009 Georgia chose to politicize the issue by introducing a draft General Assembly resolution on refugees and displaced persons from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, an action that it has repeated annually ever since. The heavily politicized text of this resolution, which the Georgian authorities have imposed on the international community, manipulates the humanitarian issue. Rather than an attempt to resolve the humanitarian problem, the text reflects the pursuit of a political goal by Georgia — a declaration of the non-existent "territorial integrity" of Georgia within the borders of the former Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.

By politicizing the refugee issue and reaffirming the need for humanitarian access, the Georgian authorities are in fact blocking such access and hindering contacts between representatives of international organizations and the refugees from Georgia who are now in South Ossetia. In October 2015, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the South Ossetian authorities reached an agreement regarding a visit to South Ossetia by representatives of the Office, who were to assess the situation of refugees living in collective accommodation in South Ossetia and consider the provision of additional humanitarian assistance. However, at the last minute, the representatives were forced to postpone their visit on account of interference from Georgia. Nevertheless, despite opposition from Georgia, representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees paid such a visit to South Ossetia in August 2016. The Office's representatives visited collective refugee centres in Tskhinvali and also went to the Leningorsk district, where they had the opportunity to see for themselves that the people whom the Georgian authorities present to the international community as "forcibly displaced persons" in actual fact live in their own homes and have no restrictions on their rights, including the right to use their native tongue, to receive an education in the Georgian language, to move freely across the South Ossetian-Georgian State border, to communicate with relatives in Georgia and to move cargo and goods. The Georgian authorities are creating obstacles and prohibiting these people from bringing even one kilogram of Russian-made products from South Ossetia into Georgia.

South Ossetia calls for the important humanitarian issue of refugees to be depoliticized. The "examples" provided by Georgia to the international community of the human rights violations allegedly taking place in South Ossetia have nothing to do with objective reality. The country's legislation does not permit any discrimination against citizens on the grounds of ethnicity or religion. The population of the Republic has equal access to government services irrespective of ethnicity. There are schools in South Ossetia where pupils from the Georgian minority can receive their primary and secondary education in the Georgian language: in the Leningorsk district, for example, 6 out of 10 schools are Georgian. Despite the lies of the Georgian authorities about supposed violations by South Ossetia of the right to freedom of movement, all citizens of the Republic of South Ossetia are fully entitled to move freely throughout the country, to leave it and to return to it. The Republic of South Ossetia demands only compliance with the laws in force governing the location and rules for crossing the border legally. It is regrettable that allegations fabricated by Georgian propaganda are often taken at face value, including by some international organizations which base their conclusions and reports on the situation in South Ossetia on these spurious assertions.

South Ossetia calls for a consistent and incremental solution to this problem in accordance with international law and taking into account the current situation in the region. These issues must be discussed in a forum at which Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia are all represented, so that balanced and truly valid decisions, including

with regard to refugees, can be taken. The only such forum at present is that provided by the Geneva discussions on security and stability in Transcaucasia. However, politicization of the issue of refugees and forcibly displaced persons by Georgia in the General Assembly is undermining substantive work on this issue in Geneva. If Georgia prefers to bring the discussion of the refugee question to an authoritative international body such as the United Nations General Assembly, then South Ossetia insists that its representatives should be given the opportunity to present their position to the States Members of the United Nations.

Unfortunately, South Ossetia is denied the opportunity to contact the Main Committees of the General Assembly and delegations of States Members of the United Nations because the Department of State of the United States of America, abusing its country's position as the host of the United Nations, refuses to grant official representatives of the Republic of South Ossetia entry into the United States.

We call on the States Members of the United Nations to address this discriminatory practice, which contradicts existing international norms, and to take the necessary action to ensure that Ossetian representatives may enter the United States and have access to United Nations Headquarters in New York in order to present the position of the Republic of South Ossetia on the refugee issue prior to the vote in the General Assembly on the issue of refugees from South Ossetia and Abkhazia.